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News Release

For Immediate Release

Black mothers support group seeks to build connections

A new support group for local black mothers is starting in Springfield. The group will hold its first meeting from 1:30 to 3 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 16, at the Bartley-Decatur Neighborhood Center, 918 E. Calhoun St., in Springfield.

"As a young black mother myself and someone who works with moms from across the community on a daily basis, it became clear that something was missing locally in terms of an easy way to build connections, mother-to-mother," says Monique Hyden, a Breastfeeding Peer Counselor with the Springfield-Greene County WIC program (and a WIC participant herself). "The idea is to have a forum to discuss what's important to us, build relationships, offer support and share resources."

Why have a group just for black moms, when so many general support groups for moms already exist? Studies have shown that certain issues like breastfeeding or co-sleeping are often seen differently by the black community than the culture at large. Infant mortality rates are higher among blacks and other minorities than among whites. Communication is crucial in addressing some of these issues.

"There's no problem with black mothers going to other groups – it's just that they rarely do," Hyden says with a laugh. "I just felt like some of these moms might be more likely to feel comfortable and safe talking about things that are affecting our demographic in a setting like this."

The group is open to all black mothers, though the target audience is those under that age of 35. Though the group is not in any way limited to WIC participants, Hyden is drawing on contacts within the pool of young families who participate in WIC to gather initial members.

The format will include some topical information or educational resources in most meetings, but there will be plenty of open forum time for discussion and sharing, too, Hyden says. Some of the topics likely to be covered including breastfeeding, co-sleeping, changes brought on by motherhood, cloth diapering and more. Guest speakers are likely from time to time.

"It's going to be all-encompassing – a little bit of everything," Hyden says.

Media are welcome to attend and cover the meeting on Monday. **Please let us know in advance if you wish to do so.** Monique Hyden can be reached at (417) 851-1583. Additional contact: Mary Ellison, WIC Coordinator, (417) 851-1586.